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II. *Some Observations sent from the East-Indies;
being in Answer to some Queries sent thither
by Richard Waller, Esq; F. R. S.*

IT does not appear that the *Maldiva-Islands* were ever joyn'd to the main Land, there being no Soundings, as they call it, between the Island and the Main, and the Earth, Sand and Shells of the one much differing from the other : The small Shells, called, *Cowries*, which pass for Money in *Bengale* and other places, are chiefly found there.

The North and South Pole are not visible under the Line, for in the clearest Night the Horizon is over-cast with a thick mighty Darkness, that no Star can be seen. The Poles are seldom visible till they have Five or Six Degrees Latitude, though the Night be never so clear.

Gum Lack is the House of a large sort of Ants, which they make on the Boughs of Trees, which serves to keep them from the Weather, &c.

'Tis certain that Cloves will attract Water at some Distance, which is daily experienced amongst the Dutch in this Country, who make a considerable Advantage thereby. I have known a Bag of Cloves laid over Water One or Two Foot Distance, which has in a Night's time imbib'd a considerable Quantity of Water, and grown so moist that the Water might be press'd from them.

There has been seen an Oyster-Shell in *Bantam* that has been about Eighteen Inches Diameter, and several in *Maccao* that has been Eighteen Inches long, and Five or Six broad, whose Meat within has been proportionable to the Shell.

I am well inform'd by the Persons that did see it, that at *Batavia* a whole Duck was taken out of the Belly of a Snake ; and that in *Achin* they did kill a Snake that had a whole Deer in its Belly, which they took out, being fresh and good, and that they did dress and eat part of the Deer.

They draw their Wire in Moulds of several Sizes, gradually, as we do ; whether they have any Art to make it more Plyant I know not.

The *Chineses* Gild Paper with Leaf-Gold and Silver, laid on with a very good sort of Varnish they have, which is the same wherewith they Varnish their Lacker'd Wares ; all which, after it is thoroughly dry, they put in a Screw-Press, and with an Instrument like our Plain, Shave it as fine as they Please ; and so they cut their Tobacco, which is as fine as a Hair.

Amber Greece is found more or less in most Parts ; great Quantities are found at *Japan*, and to the Eastward of *Java*, and at the *Maldiva-Islands* ; which, they say, they find generally fastened to the Roots of Trees that grow in the Sea near the Shoar ; and that while it is kept under Water 'tis Soft and Pliable like Wax, and sometimes like Gelly : There is now a Piece in *India*, which I have seen, that weighs above Two Thousand Ounces.

The People of *Java* Marry, and have Children at Nine and Ten Years of Age ; and generally leave Child-bearing at or before Thirty. At *Tunquin* there are Women common to any that will hire them, at Eight or Nine Years of Age.

The *Japan* and *China* Varnish is made of Turpentine and a curious sort of Oyl they have, which they mix and boyl to a convenient Consistence, which never causes any swelling in the Hands or Face, &c. of those that make or work it. The Swelling that often happens
to

to those that work the Lacker'd Ware, and sometimes to those that only pass by the Shops and look on them at Work, is from the Lack, and not the Varnish; which Lack is the Sap or Juice of a Tree which runs out slowly by cutting the Tree, and is catch'd by Pots fastned to the Tree; 'tis of the Colour and Substance of Cream, the Top, that is exposed to the Air, immediately turns Black, and the Way that they make it Black and fit for Use, is to put a small Quantity in a Bowl, and stir it continually with a piece of smooth Iron for Twenty-four or Thirty Hours, which will both thicken it and make it black; to which they put a Quantity of very fine Powder of any sort of burnt Boughs, and mix it very well together, and then with a Brush lay it smooth on any thing they design to Lack, then let it dry very well in the Sun, which will be harder than the Board it is laid on; when 'tis thoroughly dry you must rub it with a smooth Stone and Water till it is as smooth as Glass, and on that lay your Varnish made of Turpentine and Oyl boild to a due Consistence, for Black Lack: but if you would have Red, or any other colour'd Lack, you must mix your Colour in fine Powder with your Varnish, and take care to lay your Varnish on as smooth as possible you can, for therein lies the Art of Lacking well. If you would print in Gold or Silver, &c. you must with a fine Pencil dip'd in the said Varnish, draw what Flowers, Birds, &c. you please, and let it lye till it begins to be dry; then lay on your Leaf-Gold, or Silver, or Pin-Dust, &c.

It is well known that there is amongst the *Bramines* a Language called, the *Sanfcreet*, writ in a different Character from that now in Use; in which Language are written the *Porane*, or Sacred History. The *Shafram* being to them what the Bible is to Christians; and the Four Beads (whereof One is lost) containing their Divi-

nity, Law, Physick, &c. and some other Books: This Language is not understood by all *Bramines*, but only by the Studious and Learned among them: I asked one of the most eminent among them in this Place, how long it was since the said Language was lost, who answered that it was spoke in the Age of the Gods, or when they lived upon Earth, which by their Calculation continued many Thousand Years, and ended so many Years past as we reckon from the Flood, or thereabouts: but they have little Knowledge in Chronology. It's evident that several of the Languages now spoke in *India*, are derived from the *Sanscreets*, and one of the *Bramines* writ a Book to shew that the present *Hindoostan* or Language spoken by the Moors in particular, is derived from thence.

I have inquir'd of Two of the most knowing *Bramines* in this Town, and they both agree, that our *Sunday* in every Week was a Holy Day, or Day of Rest with them, and for fear they should abuse me, I have asked a *Mowla* or Mahometan Priest, a Native of *India*, and one that always lived amongst them, and he gave me the same Account. Besides this they have their Monthly Holy Days; for the Eighth Day after the Change of the Moon is always a Day of Devotion; as also the Fourteenth and the Eleventh Days from the Change, a strict Fast, called *Jaka Dasee*, or *Taka Dasee*; so likewise the Eighth Day from the Full Moon, and the Fourteenth, are Days of Devotion, and the Eleventh a *Taka Dasee*: Besides these they have throughout the Year several Festival Days and Times, as in other Religions.

Upon the Death of any Person, the next of Kin, especially a Husband for a Wife, a Father for a Child, & *vice versa*; as also a Brother for a Brother or Sister deceased, do Mourn Fifteen Days, during which time they eat only Rice and Water, and are not either to eat Berle

or mark their Foreheads, but use several Washings, and Variety of other Ceremonies, as carrying of Victuals to Gardens, Groves, and *Tanques* to distribute and make several Prayers that God would grant the deceased Party a good Place in the other World, forgive him his Sins, be favourable unto him, &c. and upon the Sixteenth Day they make a Feast to all their Friends and Relations and those of their own Coast, as they are able, and likewise Yearly upon the Day of his Death, they give Alms, *i. e.* Victuals to more or less poor People, as they are able, with whom they make Prayers for the Dead.
